

Catherine Milton
Resident of Branford, CT
Testimony to Higher Education Appropriations Hearing
February 14, 2023

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Catherine Milton and I live in Branford. I am a professor of English and Women's Studies at Norwalk Community College and a member of the Connecticut Congress of Community Colleges.

I am testifying today to offer you a picture of who your community college population is, the value they bring to the state that graduates of Connecticut's private universities statistically do not, and why it is urgent for you to insist on funding Connecticut community colleges fully and permanently through the block grant to the CSCU system.

But first, some facts:

- Funding for public higher education in Connecticut is currently 1.3% of all state appropriations.
- More than 50% of community college students in Connecticut identify as non-White.
- For every dollar of public money invested in community colleges, taxpayers receive a cumulative value of \$6.80 over the course of students' working lives. That's a 12.2% rate of return to taxpayers, which means community colleges generate more in tax revenue than they take.¹

These facts have several implications. First, any failure to appropriate robust funding to Community Colleges has a disparate impact on Black, Brown and working-class people in our state. Higher education is not a ticket to the upper middle class; access to *excellent* higher education is that ticket.

Second, if our community colleges are to afford the same opportunity as our private and public universities, then they must be funded to provide what the students at Yale, Wesleyan, and the universities already enjoy: **classes with reasonable course caps, taught by full time professors, with access to the best technology available, not the cheapest.** *Quality* education costs money, and this is what community colleges need.

Austerity plans and financial "guard rails" are a political choice, not appropriate for public higher education. Anything less than full public funding for our Community Colleges will perpetuate the shameful economic inequality in Connecticut's towns and cities.

Respectfully,

Catherine Milton, Ph D

¹ <https://www.ccdaily.com/2022/12/the-economic-value-of-community-colleges/>